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ABSTRACT

Troop ideology as defined by the scoutmaster and other involved adults radically altered the learning experiences of boys in two Boy Scout troops, even though both adhered to the official program. Using observation and interviews, researchers studied all aspects of the troops over 7 months. One troop, whose scoutmaster was benevolent and easy-going, perceived scouting as fun. Meetings were loose, raucus, and often unorganized. Formal meeting activities such as planning and learning groups quickly disintegrated into joking and play. Troop leadership and responsibility were centralized in the hands of a few senior boys who were frequently unprepared. Parents rarely participated in troop activities, preferring to donate money instead. The boys learned to function in a peer culture. The other troop, whose scoutmaster was a no-nonsense man with a strong work ethic, held elaborate, formal, organized, and quiet meetings. Meeting activities were serious business. Leadership and responsibility were spread among all the members, supported by a stable system of informal adult roles. Parents frequently participated in troop activities, especially fund-raisers. Keen observers of the adults, the boys learned responsibility and leadership. The comparison showed how organizations create an informal culture that can support or undercut official educational goals. (SB)

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# TWO BOY SCOUT TROOPS:

# THE IMPACT OF THE TROOP CULTURE ON WHAT BOYS LEARN

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# INTRODUCTION

This paper describes two different Boy Scout troops. Each followed the official Boy Scout program; yet each created radically different educational experiences for the boys who belonged. In one troop, most boys were serious about the program; in the other, most boys were not. In one troop, boy leaders diligently planned troop events; in the other, boy leaders were never "worth the powder to blow them up with," as the scoutmaster put it. We examine such systematic differences in troop functioning, their causes, and their effects.

Very little research on Boy Scouts has been conducted except for studies sponsored by the organization itself (e.g. Survey Research Center, 1960; Fleishman-Hillard, 1980). Our initial research goal, therefore, was exploratory and descriptive. We attempted to examine what boys were learning from Boy Scouts when troops functioned well. As our research progressed, however, we were struck by the enormous variation between troops, even between well-functioning troops. A previous paper (Kleinfeld and Shinkwin, 1983) examines what boys generally learn from scouting. This paper focuses rather on the different kinds of learning experiences different troops create and how this happens.

## METHODOLOGY

To obtain an understanding of the goals of scouting and how these goals were to be achieved, we analyzed organizational literature--the Boy Scout Handbook, the Troop Committee Guidebook, merit badge pamphlets, etc. The organizational literature presented the ideal situation. To obtain an understanding of how troops actually functioned, we observed two different Boy Scout troops for seven months each.

We asked the local executive director of Boy Scouts to recommend two "strong" troops for the study. We deliberately chose strong troops in order to see what boys learned when Boy Scout troops were functioning reasonably well.

We interviewed the scoutmasters and assistant scoutmasters of each troop, 20 youth members (long-term members and those new to the troop), and 18 parents of boys in the troop. Fifteen parents also kept detailed diaries on their child's experiences in scouts and comments on these experiences. Diary data were followed up in parent interviews. The youth and adult interviews provided us with the inside view of participants in the systems we were observing.

The first author, an anthropologist, assumed the role of participant-observer--the mother of an eleven-year old boy enrolled in each troop during the time of troop observations. She maintained a detailed diary of her son's experiences in scouting and her son's perceptions of the troops. Her son, today, is a very active and dedicated Boy Scout. The second author, an educator, assumed the role of detached observer and analyzed the specifically educational events that occurred in each troop.

We observed seventy-five troop events (191 hours), 28 events in one troop, 34 in the other, and 13 council-wide events (both troops). We chose a range of activities including troop meetings, troop or council-wide campouts, and special events such as a "freeze-up canoe race" and the annual scouting show. Notes on these events emphasized "thick description" to provide us with the rich ethnographic detail necessary for the analysis of a social system over a seven-month period. For the purposes of this paper, the observational data are most critical, providing the empirical basis for many of our interpretations; interview data are incorporated where relevant.

This paper was reviewed by the two scoutmasters and assistant scoutmasters of each troop and by the executive director of the local Boy Scout Council. All found our observations accurate and each scoutmaster stood by his particular philosophy.

## ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH

It is essential to understand scouting pedagogy in order to interpret what goes on in troops and to examine to what extent troops deviate from the official program. Boy Scout organizational literature provides an inside view of the organization's goals and educational methods.

Boy Scouts' objectives emphasize character building and citizenship. A Boy Scout pledges "to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." Boy Scouts, reflecting cultural expectations of adult males in American society, stresses that boys should learn to be brave and self-reliant; they should

be achievers, leaders, and responsible citizens; they should be active participants in the public sphere of society.

The basic approach, established by 1916, reflects these goals through several key features: (1) camping is a core experience because it dramatizes taking care of yourself; (2) individual achievement is encouraged and recognized through working for badges and higher rank in an "advancement system"; and (3) leadership is a skill that boys can learn systematically by participating in troop social organization and holding such roles as patrol leader.

Boy Scouts places a boy in a learning environment unlike that he encounters elsewhere. He is a member of an all-male association, surrounded by boys of various ages (11-17), some of whom operate as formal mentors. He is expected to assume active teaching, planning, and leadership roles, not only to learn information from an adult teacher. He has close contact with adult males who emphasize practical skills, advancement, leadership, and community service. The environment presents learning opportunities not ordinarily found in schools. Schools emphasize academic achievement; youth typically assume passive learning roles and are members of narrowly age-graded groups.

## THE TWO TROOPS: A CONTRAST

### General Introduction

Both of the troops we studied have a long (20+ years) history in an Alaskan community of about 48,000 people and are well known within the local scouting council. One troop, which we call "University troop,"

meets in a church in the University area and draws most (67%) of its members from the immediate neighborhood. The scoutmaster, as well as about half the parents, work for the University. All youth members attend public school.

The other, which we call "Downtown troop," meets in a church near the main business area in town. Members are drawn from a large radius encompassing downtown as well as outlying areas. There is a broad range of occupational affiliation of the parents who are more representative of local business interests than those in the University troop. The scoutmaster is a state employee. One-fourth of the active boys attend private religious schools.

The Downtown troop has almost twice as many active boys, and twice as many younger boys in absolute numbers (Table 1). There is no substantial difference between the two troops, however, in the proportionate ages or ranks of members.

Scoutmasters, boys and parents in both troops believe their troop is the best troop in town (although the scoutmaster and some of the parents and youth in the University troop cited what they believed were short-term problems with the boy leaders' conduct during the time of our observations). Adult and youth members of both troops pointed to large numbers of awards from competitive events, high involvement in outdoor activities such as hikes or campouts, and a history of producing Eagle Scouts as justification for pride in their troop.

Table 1

TROOP CHARACTERISTICS: YOUTH MEMBERS

| Features | University Troop | Downtown Troop |
|---|---|---|
| Number of Active Members | 13 | 22 |
| Average Number in Attendance[1] | 12 | 17 |
| (Range) | (7-15) | (8-18) |
| Age of Active Members: 11-13 | 7 (54%) | 15 (68%) |
| 14-17 | 6 (46%) | 7 (31%) |
| Rank: Below First Class | 6 (46%) | 10 (45%) |
| First Class and Above | 7 (54%) | 12 (56%) |

[1]Over a seven-month period

Troop Programs

An active member in either troop spends considerable leisure-time in Boy Scout activities. Official events average 29 hours per month in the University troop and 46 in the Downtown troop (Table 2). Both troops participate about the same amount in council-wide events, troop meetings, and campouts.

Troop meetings are held once a week for 1½ hours in the University troop and 2 hours in the Downtown troop. Both troops value camping and outdoor events. Each has a "traditional" campout, in addition to other troop camping events. In the University troop, a fall father-son campout is held at a nearby river during the migration of whitefish; boys and their fathers spear fish at night with light from Coleman lanterns or flashlights. The troop emphasizes "fun" outdoor events that fathers and sons can share.

While the Downtown troop views outdoor events as fun, "fun" in this context means "endurance." This troop traditionally camps out in mid-winter (Christmas vacation) at a nearby lake, using a cabin belonging to another youth organization. Skiing and ice fishing are the major activities. The trip is a challenge since the temperature drops to 30 degrees below zero or colder. From this scoutmaster's point of view, the colder the better. "Remember, it's wintertime and we're going no matter what the temperature is."

Troop meetings and campouts are primary activities in the University troop (Table 2). The Downtown troop spends similar amounts of time in these activities. But fund-raising in the Downtown troop brings boys and adults together for almost as much time as meetings and campouts put

Table 2

USE OF TIME IN TWO BOY SCOUT TROOPS OVER A SEVEN MONTH PERIOD

| TROOP EVENTS | UNIVERSITY TROOP[1] | | | | DOWNTOWN TROOP[2] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | No. of Days | Total Hours | (% of Total Hours) | No. | No. of Days | Total Hours | (% of Total Hours) |
| Troop Meeting | 28 | 28 | 42 | (40) | 26 | 26 | 52 | (23) |
| Troop Campout | 3 | 7 | 49 | (47) | 2 | 6 | 50 | (23) |
| Troop Leaders' Council | 2 | 2 | 3 | (3) | 3 | 3 | 5 | (2) |
| Flag Ceremony | 5 | 5 | 5 | (5) | 1 | 1 | 1 | (.4) |
| Money-Making Events | | | | | 14 | 14 | 86 | (39) |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 6 | (5) | 6 | 6 | 28 | (13) |
| TOTAL | 39 | 43 | 105 | (100) | 52 | 56 | 222 | (100) |
| Council-Wide Events[3] | 6 | 12 | 99 | | 6 | 12 | 99 | |
| TOTAL | 45 | 55 | 204 | | 58 | 68 | 321 | |
| Average Time Per Month | | | 29 | | | | 45 | |

[1]October-April.

[2]Late April to mid-July, September-December.

[3]These events represent a minimum of those available to scouts, representing those which were regularly attended by most scout troops in the area such as the camporees, Clean Up America Day, Scouterama, Junior Leadership Camp, and a Klondike Derby.

together. For example, the Downtown troop recycles newspapers to sell for insulation. This occurs on a Saturday, once a month, for at least ten hours. Papers are collected, sorted, bundled, and delivered to the buyer. The labor is impressive--on any Saturday the boys and scoutmaster process thousands of pounds of paper. Boys also put up and take down the American flag on major holidays at local businesses. This activity requires them (and the scoutmaster) to be on hand at 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on every holiday.

The Downtown troop uses this money to pay for summer camp and summer trips. Each boy has an account based on his labor. In this troop, "Momma doesn't pay," the scoutmaster frequently notes. Parents are expected to contribute their time, however, to support youth fund-raising. The scoutmaster and other adults who regularly volunteer their recognize that, given the cost of gas alone, the profitability of these ventures can be questioned. However, they point out the value of teaching boys to "pay their own way" and boys in this troop brag about their work. These activities are also used to teach boys small business skills, such as how to negotiate a troop contract with a local business.

Troop adults also say these activities are fun; observations of "paper days" indicate that, while boys and adults work hard, the atmosphere is clearly that of a "work party," sometimes with the emphasis on "party."

Fund-raising in the Downtown troop also pays for summer trips to the Jamboree and other scouting events. This troop is known as "the travelling troop," according to its members and those of other local troops. Other scoutmasters criticize what they see as an exorbitant emphasis on fund-raising and travel.

In contrast, parents in the University Troop Committee (mostly busy professionals) contribute funds for activities outside troop meetings, viewing fund-raising as too time-consuming. Contributing money, not time, is the way adults support this troop. The scoutmaster, while aware of the potential educational benefits of youth fund-raising, is discouraged by past experiences in this troop where youth/adult response to these events was very low. In addition, the scoutmaster and boys view these events as "all work and no fun."

In sum, analysis of use of time by the two troops reveals major similarities. Both troops demand an impressive amount of time from active members. Both participate about the same in council-wide events, meetings, and campouts. A major contrast is the prominence of fund-raising events in the Downtown troop and their complete absence in the University troop. University troop adults are reluctant to contribute the time needed to support this kind of youth activity. Downtown troop adults, on the other hand, embrace a "work for what you get" ethic and support that value by contributing time.

Although the study was not designed to look at the source of these contrasting adult attitudes, analysis of our data on the backgrounds or occupational status of the adults does not reveal any consistent patterns between adults in the two troops that could explain the differing ideologies. Rather, it appears that each troop embraces a relatively stable approach which attracts families which hold values that support the troop ideology.

Troop Organization

Meetings: a Description. Both troops meet in a church basement in a large room with an adjacent kitchen area. In both buildings, troops use other rooms when multiple activities take place. Boys stand or sit on the floor in the University troop in patrol formations (three groups) for troop discussions or break into smaller, often loosely structured groups. The senior patrol leader or discussion leader stands or sits on the floor in front of these groups. In contrast, boys set up chairs in the Downtown troop in three groups, one for each patrol, facing a long table flanked by flags, at which the boy leaders (senior patrol leader, his assistant, scribe) sit. Discussion groups also use chairs.

University troop meetings, in general, are raucous affairs, with a high noise level, a great deal of physical activity including pushing, shoving, wrestling, and a high level of verbal confrontation usually in the form of joking. Older boys often disengage from troop activities, leaving the meeting briefly or entering the "off limits" kitchen area. Competitive games (in which the rules rapidly change) were played at most (77%) of the observed meetings.

In striking contrast, Downtown troop meetings often have the appearance of a board meeting in a large corporation. Physical movement is controlled; boys give serious attention to the subjects under discussion, volunteering ideas and time. Joking occurs but is limited and the noise level is more comparable to that occuring in a classroom, although highly spirited exchanges occasionally punctuate serious discussions. Rules rarely change in this troop's games, and games are played less frequently (38% of the observed meetings).

Meetings: Troop Structure and Its Functioning. In spite of the easily observed differences in "meeting behavior," the formal social structure is approximately the same. Both troops follow official Boy Scout principles of social organization. Each has a structure made up of patrols with their respective leaders, a senior patrol leader and his assistant, and other youth leadership roles. Each has a scoutmaster and at least one assistant scoutmaster. The kinds of duties assigned to youth in particular roles, i.e., the role definitions, are similar in both troops. For example, the senior patrol leader is expected to plan and run the meetings and patrol leaders are expected to organize their membership. Boys with various skill awards and merit badges lead small groups of boys in discussions of badge requirements. Each scoutmaster occupies a coaching role.

The differences in the two troops derive from (1) the degree of elaboration of the structure--the number of boys holding leadership roles. (2) the way youth and adult occupants of the formal positions actually execute their roles, and (3) the operation of an informal system of adult roles in the Downtown troop that has no counterpart in the University troop.

Youth Roles. More formal roles are regularly assigned to boys in the Downtown troop. For example, a scribe in this troop collects dues and keeps notes on the meeting. The responsibility of keeping accurate and adequate notes, e.g., lists of people for various outings or the needed equipment, notes on the outcomes of rapid verbal exchanges during discussions, was a challenge; one sixth grader visibly sweated in his

efforts to keep up. This role was not assigned to anyone in the University troop because the scoutmaster views this youth activity as burdensome (not fun).

In the Downtown troop, the assistant senior patrol leader also plays an active role at meetings, complementary to the senior patrol leader. In the University troop, this boy only took an active role in meetings in the absence of the senior patrol leader. Boys in the Downtown troop who did not occupy main leadership positions often functioned as leaders/teachers in boy-led learning groups. These groups were usually small; a large number of them would be formed at the same time during a meeting with any boy who had earned the particular award leading the group. In the University troop, one older boy functioned as the "Trainer." He and/or the senior patrol leader or assistant senior patrol leader (and occasionally a patrol leader) led these groups, and the groups were much larger than those in the other troop. In sum, boy leadership responsibility is diffuse in the Downtown troop. In the University troop, boy leadership is centralized in two or three key positions.

The preparation of the boy leaders in each troop also differed. In the University troop there were two meetings at which neither the senior patrol leader nor his assistant attended; there were at least four meetings that were essentially unplanned, even though boy leaders were present. The Downtown troop never lacked a boy leader and we observed no unplanned meetings. In fact, boy leaders in this troop came armed with notes and schedules they had prepared with the assistance of the scoutmaster.

The selection of youth leaders and the duration of their tenure in the troop also differed, resulting in more boys occupying leadership positions in the Downtown troop than in the University troop over a

comparable period of time. In the University troop during our observation period, the scoutmaster selected the Senior Patrol Leader on the basis of age (minimum age: 14) and rank (first class and above). In the Downtown troop, the boys elected the occupant of this position. In this troop, the scoutmaster imposed a rank only (first class or above) prerequisite. During our observations, this troop had three senior patrol leaders (one of whom was 12). The University troop had one senior patrol leader. In the Downtown troop the scoutmaster changed boy leaders about every six months, both to replace any boy who was not doing the job and to give more boys experience in leadership roles.

Adult Roles. While official Boy Scout ideology emphasizes the significance of boy planning and leadership, supported by adult coaching, the scoutmaster is clearly the key role in the system. The scoutmasters in the University and Downtown troops are both extremely active in local scouting, donating large amounts of time and energy to their troops and other scouting activities. Both became involved with their troops initially as parents of a member but stayed after their own boys had become Eagle Scouts. Both served in various official capacities in the troop prior to becoming the scoutmaster. Each has had a long (5+ years) involvement with his troop. Based on interview data with parents and youth members, both are viewed very positively. Boys look up to these men and value their relationship with them.

In interviews, both scoutmasters indicated that they follow and support official scouting philosophy that troops should be boy-led with the scoutmaster occupying a coaching role. Both want boys to have fun

as scouts and view scouts as an important experience to prepare boys for future roles. Both see outdoor events as the key scouting experience, reflecting official ideology. Meetings are places to expose boys to technical skills they will practice on campouts and in other settings. Both emphasize learning how to take care of oneself outdoors, especially under severe weather conditions, reflecting the local culture in a community where many families regularly camp in summer and where some hunt in the winter. Both men and their families are long-time campers. They enjoy the out-of-doors and want to share this experience with boys.

Our observations of troop meetings, however, indicate striking differences in scoutmaster style. The University troop scoutmaster projects a benevolent image to the boys, jokes a great deal and disciplines primarily through joking rather than direct confrontation, although occasionally he takes direct action. The Downtown troop scoutmaster, while joking occasionally with the boys, more often takes a serious, direct approach in meetings, controlling through crisp, sharply given orders or verbal slaps. For example, a typical response from these scoutmasters to disorder during the beginning of a meeting is illustrated by the following quotes.

> University Troop: "Hey, guys, are we gonna get this meeting going tonight or next week?"
>
> Downtown Troop: "Shut your mouth unless you have something to say."

A typical response in the University troop would be "next week," and in the Downtown troop would be absolute silence.

The Downtown troop scoutmaster is a "no-nonsense" man who imposes high standards on boys. He views boys as potentially capable participants in events and communicates this message in various ways. He expects them to "be prepared" and to behave and imposes sanctions if they don't. The senior patrol leaders are cautioned publicly that if they don't perform, they are "finished" in that role. For example, one evening the scoutmaster expressed disgust with what he viewed as the senior patrol leader's poor planning and publicly dressed him down, noting in part, "You got in that position one night. You can get out of it a lot faster than you got in." In this troop there are rules which do not change and everyone is expected to follow them. "There's rules and you're gonna live by them." There is a right way and a wrong way and the scoutmaster (and other adults) presents the right way.

In contrast, the University troop scoutmaster insists that boys make and enforce the rules. "You guys set the rules." He feels that boys benefit from mistakes. Hence, rather than directly intervene when the senior patrol leader consistently came to meetings unprepared, he provided encouragement to him and also encouraged other older boys to intervene through calling a special meeting of the troop leadership council. In his view, the observation of poor boy leadership as well as good boy leadership can be a lesson.

Another significant difference between the two troops is the average amount of adult involvement in meetings---twice as great for the Downtown troop (Table 3). Adult participation is a regular feature of Downtown troop meetings but not of University troop meetings. The lowest number

Table 3

TROOP CHARACTERISTICS: ADULT PARTICIPATION

| Features | University Troop | Downtown Troop |
|---|---|---|
| Average Ratio of Adults to Youth | 2:10 | 4:10 |
| Range of Adults Present at Meetings | 1-4[1] | 3-11[2] |

[1] 26 meetings

[2] 23 meetings

of adults at any of the Downtown troop meetings was three, whereas only one-fifth of University troop meetings had as much as three or more adults present.

In the University troop, the few parents (male) who are present for short periods of time occasionally talk with boys. However, they spend most of their time attending the parent troop committee meeting in another room.

In contrast, the Downtown troop has a core of eight adults (males and females) who regularly participate in troop activities. Two are former scoutmasters who have been with the troop for ten years. Others are parents of present or former members and one is a young adult who was a former member. Meetings are often conducted by the boys to the background hum of spirited conversations of these adults who interject comments to the group discussions. A great deal of informal learning takes place as the boys eavesdrop or openly listen to the conversations of the adults. These adults know the boys well and strike up individual conversations with them, discussing not only their scouting activities but school and other extracurricular events important in the life of the boy. They assist the boys in keeping their records straight and encourage their participation in scouting activities. The involvement of these adults not only contributes to the smooth functioning of the troop, but communicates to the boys that scouting is important. Why else would all these adults come to the meetings?

In addition, many of these adults are dedicated to Boy Scouts and meetings are often characterized by exchanges or long discussions between

themselves or between them and the boys about various aspects of the organization. For example, they discuss the old uniform versus the new uniform, what constitutes "full uniform," the trading of "pocket patches," the correct way to wear the neckerchief, regulations regarding the Order of the Arrow (an honorary Boy Scout organization to which many boys aspire), differences in leadership badges, etc. This talk presents and reinforces the importance of scout culture. The uninitiated or the new initiate must learn a new language to participate fully in this troop. The excitement and interest exhibited by adults during these exchanges encourages boys and anthropologists alike to learn the system.

In summary, while both troops follow the basic social structure described in the Boy Scout literature, the University troop's structure is narrow and the Downtown troop's approach is elaborate. The Downtown troop assigns more formal roles to youth and adults and encourages more active participation in these roles. In addition, the formal social structure in the Downtown troop is supplemented by a stable system of informal adult roles, occupied by active participants.

Meetings: Activities. The same kinds of activities occurred in both troops but with different emphases and different organization of teaching and leading roles. Common activities include planning, boy-led or adult-led learning groups, Boards of Review, and Courts of Honor.

In the University troop, the scoutmaster makes announcements about equipment needs or skills that will be tested on the campout. The amount of time spent planning in any one meeting is small due to the low level of attention from older boys in the troop, whose behavior distracts the

younger boys from the subject. Often, older boys engage in a series of jokes that amuse the group but inhibit any serious planning. Any serious question in this troop could trigger such an exchange. An example from our notes follows.

> Scoutmaster: What should we do for scoutarama (the annual scout show)?
> Boy 1: Have a cheerleading contest.
> Boy 2: Have a wood cutting contest.
> Scoutmaster: If I can bring my wood.
> Boy 1: Let's have a wet T-shirt contest.
> Boy 2: Sure, Boy Scouts in wet T-shirts.
> Scoutmaster: What is a wet T-shirt contest?
> Boy 1: You get a foxy chick, put her in a T-shirt, wet her down. (Lots of laughter.)
> Boy 3: I second the suggestion.
> Boy 4: The motion is on the floor, it has been seconded. (Discussion goes on with mocking of parliamentary procedure.)
> The subject of scoutarama is dropped.

In contrast, the senior patrol leader leads the discussion of such events in the Downtown troop, not the scoutmaster. This troop spends a large amount of time planning events, sometimes devoting an entire meeting to serious discussion of how to organize a campout or other activity. The senior patrol leader, scoutmaster, and boys who have been on similar outings present a considerable amount of information about the right kinds of equipment for the expected weather--appropriate boots, mittens, water containers, sleeping bags, etc. Adults constantly monitor the proceedings, adding details or demanding group attention to the topic, if necessary. The virtue of having the <u>right</u> equipment and following the <u>right</u> procedures are constantly extolled and reinforced.

In summary, planning in the University troop is not a key feature of the meetings and is usually led by the scoutmaster, in contrast with

the Downtown troop where planning is boy-led and occupies a large percentage of time at every meeting.

In both troops, boy-led learning groups were a feature of the meetings. Boy teaching, however, was more prominent in the University troop; this type of learning group occurred at 57% of the meetings in contrast to 35% of the Downtown meetings, where troop planning occupied proportionately much more meeting time. These boy-led learning groups focused on skill award training in such topics as knots and lashing, communications, first aid, camping, hiking, community living. Boy teachers in both troops approach their role in a serious fashion using a question-answer format and running over the required knowledge for the award. They all emphasize the importance of really understanding the material, often putting the information in a language format more easily understood than that presented in the handbook. Boys who taught these groups also were responsible for testing the learners and certifying their competency. These groups were often of very short duration in the University troop, dissolving due to lack of interest on the part of the learners.

The following excerpts from our field notes are typical of a University troop boy-led learning group.

(1) The senior patrol leader (SPL) is leading a group on community living skills.
SPL: What is government?
Scout replies: It is someone who takes land away.
(The group gets loud; boys are eating food; the scoutmaster comes over and tells them to put the food away.) Several scouts offer definitions of government. The group talks about definitions of government, voluntary versus private organizations and community problems (pollution and unemployment).
SPL asks: What is a community organization?
Scouts respond: Scouts, Lions, school board.
(Boys are doing push ups; they are told to pay attention.)

(2) The SPL is leading a group working on a camping badge.

SPL: What camping items should you take with you in the summer?
Boy 1: One shoe.
SPL: Why one shoe?
Boy 1: I'm an amputee.
Boy 2: I'd take a bra.
Boy 1: A girdle (pause), Stay Free Maxi Pads.
Boy 3: Rely.
Boy 4: Make-up.
SPL: Is this a Girl Scout troop or a Boy Scout troop?
Boy 3: None of the above.
SPL: What would you take on a summer campout?
Boy 3: A long sleeve and short sleeve shirt.
SPL: What is the difference between a rucksack and knapsack?
Boy 3: Different names.
Boy 5: One is made of rucks.
(Other jokes on this theme.)
SPL: (Yells) I'm trying to teach you something.
(Dead silence for a few seconds.)
Boy 3: It's hard for (boy 2) to learn.
Boy 2: I plead the fifth.
Boy 3: I plead the sixth.

Boy-led learning groups in the Downtown troop are serious sessions and distractions are not tolerated by the boy leader or the learners, who verbally abuse transgressors. Boy teachers are organized as the following short excerpt from a teaching session for the Communication Skill award, led by an 8th grade boy, illustrates.

Boy teacher: Make an emergency phone call; there is an emergency situation at home. What would you do?
Boys respond seriously: Dial 911.
Boy teacher: You must remember: WHO, WHERE, WHAT.
Boy teacher repeats: What are the three things you give on the phone?
Boys respond.

In both troops <u>adult-led teaching</u> groups occurred with about the same emphasis (taking up most of 29% of the meetings in the University troop and 27% of the Downtown meetings). Adults taught first aid and citizenship, winter camping, outdoor survival, and bear protection. In

both troops boys were usually attentive. In the University troop, however, boys sometimes left the teaching group to go to a nearby grocery for candy, and only a few completed assignments.

Boards of Review are oral examinations to determine if a boy is ready to progress in rank. According to scouting regulations, boys test boys for the first three ranks with testing for the highest three ranks done by adults. The review is "a check of both the technical skills and the Scout's attitude and practice of the ideals of Scouting" (Scoutmasters Handbook, 1972:185).

Ten boards in the University troop and eight in the Downtown troop were observed. In both troops, boys are cautioned not to harrass the candidate but a certain amount of hazing occurs. This feature is particularly well developed in the University troop, as the following excerpt of a boy-conducted review from our field notes illustrates.

Examiner 1: What hike did you do?
Candidate: From _____'s house to mine.
Examiner 2: How long did it take?
Candidate: Forty months and forty days; I took baby steps.
Examiner 2: Can you prove you did it?
Examiner 1: What did you do for first aid?
Examiner 3: How many people did you save? There is a minimum requirement you save two people's lives.
Examiner 1: We are not kidding, we are not joking, we are serious.
Examiner 3: Dead serious.
Examiner 1: Did you do first aid? What are the pressure points for bleeding?
Examiner 3: Tie a tourniquet on your head.
Examiner 2: Do you know ANY pressure points?
(Candidate points to four places on his body.)
Examiner 2: You flunked, we only want two places; do your points, point at them.
Examiner 1: Give four minor...
(More questioning on first aid.)
Examiner 2: Have you been reverent?
Candidate: What's that?
Examiner 2: Do you just say it because you have to or do you want to? You are supposed to live by the scout law. You don't just say it. It's in the book.

Candidate: It's not in there.
Examiner 2: Don't lie to me. It's not in there just to memorize.

In the University troop, the boy examiners typically asked questions but did not give the candidate time to answer; raised a serious topic, such as first aid, and then joked about it; and interspersed a joking approach with a serious approach creating confusion on the part of the candidate about what kind of answer (funny or serious) was appropriate.

Although it is not required by the official Boy Scout program, the Downtown troop requires that an adult be present at all reviews. Minor harrassment rarely occurs during the review. Rather, hazing is ritualized at the conclusion when the boys announce their decision, nearly always initially telling the candidate he has failed and then laughingly telling him he has passed. In the Downtown troop, more serious testing occurs with an exchange of technical information between boy reviewers and the candidate. The following excerpt from the Downtown troop illustrates these features. In this review the adult closely observed the proceedings but made few comments. At the end, the boys failed the candidate on first aid.

Examiner 1: Show scout spirit.
Candidate: No response.
Examiner 2: Tell me how you show scout spirit.
Candidate: Helping scouts, working on newspapers.
Examiner 2: Is it things only for scouts?
Candidate: No.
Examiner 1: Give it to him, geez.
Examiner 1: If you are lost in the wilderness, what would you do?
Candidate: Get a compass and map.
Examiner 1: What if you fall out of a plane?
Candidate: Stay in the same place; find a place where planes can see you and make a distress signal.
Examiner 1: What would you REALLY do? [Comments to Examiner 3 "go bananas."]
Examiner 1: Really, the thing would be -- don't panic.
Examiner 1: With a compass, how do you get real north from magnetic north?

Candidate: (Answers correctly.)
Examiner 1: What is first aid?
Candidate: First aid before professional help.
Examiner 1: What do you do if a person has a heart attack?
Candidate: Call for help.
(Examiners argue about advisability of doing CPR.)
Examiner 1: What are the dangers in moving an injured person?
Candidate: If it's a fractured bone, it could bust.
Examiner 2: When do you move a person?
Candidate: If he is in the road.
Examiners: NO
Examiner 1: What if there is intense heat (hinting at danger of fire).
Candidate: Cool him off.
Examiners: Oh, no.
Examiner 2: There are FLAMES.
Examiner 3: This is the only time you move a person.

In summary, boys in both troops test other boys on technical skills and scouting virtues through the institution of the Board of Review. The Downtown troop, however, requires an adult to be present and the testing exercise is serious. The University troop, in contrast, leaves testing to the older boys. Troop traditions are to haze the candidate and test his nerve and wit more than his knowledge.

Courts of Honor. The general features of Courts of Honor are similar in both troops--a meeting with ritualized ceremonies for parents and boys at which the boys receive merit badges and progress awards. But the organization of the courts differs. In the University troop, the senior patrol leader leads the meeting and gives out the awards (lower ranks only), followed by scoutmaster announcements.

In the Downtown troop, parents from the Troop Committee, rather than a boy leader, give the awards. Not only the senior patrol leader but also other boys participate in the meeting by conducting part of the ceremony and giving formal talks about troop events, describing for the parents activities since the last court. This is followed by

announcements from the scoutmaster and possibly from other adults associated with the troop. At one of the Downtown courts, two boys received the religious merit badge from the Roman Catholic bishop, who bestowed the awards to the accompaniment of flashbulbs and much ado from the audience, especially the Catholic families present. The Courts of the Downtown troop are festive, folksy occasions due to the fact that so many of the parents work with the troop and therefore know each other, an important feature of this troop.

In sum, the courts in both troops publicly reward a boy's achievements. As with other activities, the Downtown troop creates active roles for larger numbers of boys (not only the senior patrol leader) and also creates formal roles for parents. In the University troop, only the senior patrol leader and the scoutmaster play major roles. Parents from the troop committee take part on special occasions, such as awarding the higher star and life ranks.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings reported here contribute specific, concrete data on Boy Scouts as an educational institution that have been previously lacking in the research literature. The view in the literature that involvement in Boy Scouts is usually casual and represents only a minor portion of a boy's leisure time (cf., Hollingshead 1975:221) should be modified to recognize that the opposite may be the case. In this case study, which, by design, examines two troops viewed by the organization

as well functioning troops, Boy Scout activities for active members took up a great deal of their (and sometimes their parents') free time. In fact, membership in the Downtown troop for many of the boys draws a net around them and their families, placing them all in an active and powerful social network that provides varied educational experiences for youth and makes considerable time (and driving) demands on parents. Furthermore, in our study, Boy Scouts does not attempt to insulate youth from adult experiences as the literature suggests (Hollingshead 1975:108). Quite the contrary, these two troops attempt to train boys to play adult roles and draw boys into increased interaction with many adults, especially in the Downtown troop, where meetings have a high adult to youth ratio.

The comparative perspective provided by this case study of two troops illustrates the way organizations create an informal culture that can support or undercut the official educational goals. In his analysis of why youth organizations fail, Stephens (1983) suggests factors which account for troop differences, such as the extent of parent involvement and the extent to which young people work together toward a common goal (for example raising money for a trip). Our study illustrates the importance of both these factors. The central variable in explaining troop differences, however, appeared to be ideological.

On one level, both troops were organized "by the book." The formal similarity in social organization and meeting activities--boy-led learning groups or Boards of Review--in the two troops creates certain similarities in educational events. The differences in the troops are particularly interesting, however, since they create quite different learning situations even though the specific events appear to be similar.

The key variable in explaining the differences in the University and Downtown troops is clearly the ideology of the scoutmaster and other troop adults. The University troop emphasizes fun and adult participation through donations of money; the Downtown troop emphasizes a work ethic and adult participation through donations of time. Obviously there is a relationship between these dimensions since the fund-raising of the Downtown troop necessitates large amounts of adult time in support activities and the potential of fund-raising in the other troop is constrained by limited adult involvement.

The contrast in scoutmaster styles (which reflects their individual philosophies as well as their personalities) sets the tone for the meetings and supports the differing ideological thrusts of the two troops. In the Downtown troop, a demanding scoutmaster is buttressed by an equally demanding committee of adult assistants. Adults clearly formulate and enforce specific rules for behavior. The use of space, for example, is symbolic of the high degree of adult control. Boys are presented immediately with a highly structured environment--chairs in patrol formation and a table in front for the boy leaders. In contrast, the relaxed use of space in the University troop, along with the jovial approach of the scoutmaster and the absence of other adults, symbolizes the idea that scouting is fun and that boys are in charge. In this troop boys make and enforce their own rules which often change. The young boys learn how to operate in this fast-paced, quickly changing environment dominated by older boys or (as several did) they drop out, complaining about the hazing.

The different ideological approaches of the scoutmasters, with one emphasizing work and the other a good time, underlies the other major

contrast--the large number of positions of responsibility assigned to youth in the Downtown troop compared to the University troop. The difference between the troops has less to do with formal roles than with informal responsibilities. The structure of youth roles in the Downtown troop indeed approximates that of adult roles; many youth, other than the formal leaders, participate publicly in leadership roles--instructing, teaching groups or speaking publicly at a Court of Honor. Likewise, the more centralized structure of youth leadership in the University troop parallels the more centralized structure of adult roles.

Youth behavior in formal roles in the troops also mirrors adult behavior. Adults in the Downtown troop in formal or informal roles are highly organized and celebrate the virtue of being organized. Boy leaders, likewise, are prepared and informal leaders emerge whenever the occasion permits. Multiple leadership adult models were absent in the University troop which had continual boy leader problems. (It is also possible that the Downtown troop had fewer boy leadership problems because it was larger and there were more boys to draw on). In these troops, youth appear to use adult models in the immediate setting of the troop as templates for their own behavior.

What boys learned in each troop was a direct result of each troop's social organization and ideology. In the Downtown troop, youth see serious planning, teaching, and testing, monitored by a strict scoutmaster as appropriate behavior. The scoutmaster's angry outbursts at their incompetence were not resented. For example, one boy commented:

> Our troop is a real good troop. We have a real good scoutmaster. The boys have gotten used to his getting mad. We know he isn't mad. He wants you to do it the right way. He acts mad so you remember it. His nostrils flare--that's so you remember it for the next time. He jokes with us and we joke with him.

In interviews, boys in the Downtown troop echoed themes which emerged in the adult interviews, especially the importance of paying one's own way, advancing in the system, and occupying leadership roles. Their comments also demonstrated a keen appreciation of specific personality traits of the different troop adults illustrating that adults were indeed being closely scrutinized. In the Downtown troop, boys learn scout skills and they learn how to lead a meeting and how to get things done in a group.

In the University troop, it is a boy's world. What the youth are trying to learn is not so much scout skills as how to stay afloat in a lively, fast moving peer culture, led by older boys. Boys learn to joke and to get along with older peers. Verbal sparring dominated nearly all activities, in high or low key, depending on the activity. In interviews, boys in the University troop expressed the view of their scoutmaster that Boy Scouts is an arena where you have fun, do interesting things, and learn outdoor skills. Some of the older boys explicitly rejected the serious, work-oriented model of the Downtown troop. For example, one commented:

> The troop is good for me. It's not just the organization and stuff, it's the guys. The scoutmaster wants some structure. He's not gonna press it that much. It's pretty much up to us, I guess, within limits. (The Downtown troop)... there's just too much discipline. There's no room for anything. Work, work, work, advancement, raise money.

In this study, local troop ideology emerged as the key variable in explaining troop differences; adults define the ideology and most youth members support it. Parents and boys are quite aware of troop differences and can select a troop which suits their orientation. Adults with similar values come together in these two troop settings and through time a troop culture is developed, which reflects these values.

We have not labeled one of these troops "successful" and the other "unsuccessful". Both troops responded to the objectives of most of their members, and these objectives differed. The educational experience each troop created, however, differed profoundly, even though each followed the official scouting program.

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